

REVIEW ARTICLE

## Internationalised Reform: Overlapping Agendas in East Asian and Latin American Higher Education

DANIEL C. LEVY

*East Asian Higher Education: Traditions and Transformations*, edited by Albert E. Yee (Oxford: Pergamon, 1995), xiv + 213 pp., £49.95/\$80.00.

*América Latina: Universidades en Transición*, by Simon Schwartzman (Washington, DC: Organization of American States, 1996), xi + 200 pp.

### I

A COMMON APPROACH in comparative studies is to identify similarities across cases that are otherwise different in fundamental respects, the idea being that such similarities are particularly notable. That approach seems useful in discussing these two regional surveys: there are major differences between the two regions under consideration, and Yee's volume on East Asia and Schwartzman's on Latin America are radically different in approach, but through it all readers may be struck by salient similarities in the higher education trajectories portrayed. Allowing that any broad argument can be no more than suggestive, and bypassing many other matters treated in these books, I will focus on how both regions pursue a remarkably overlapping, internationally promoted, reform agenda.

Commonality would in fact be striking even if the analysis were limited to either of the two regions. Each region is sufficiently large and diverse to lead experts to recognise deep dangers in generalising about it. Latin America, usually defined as encompassing some 20 countries, stretches from those which already have or will soon have a population of more than 100 million (Brazil and Mexico) to those with just a few million; from long-standing democracies (Costa Rica) and several more problematic democracies (Paraguay), to a single long-standing dictatorship (Cuba); from countries with credible aspirations to enter the First World (Chile) to those mired in the Fourth (Haiti). The region's higher education enrolment rate, 18 per cent of the age cohort, is an average based on countries ranging from just a few per cent to 39 per cent (Argentina).

One reason that the book on Latin America manages to identify and analyse regional patterns better than Yee's book is that the heterogeneity across East Asia's 18 countries—those facing the Pacific and China Sea and those east of India in Southeast Asia—is even greater than Latin America's. China, with its 1.8 billion people, is about four times larger than Latin America in population. Although shaken by economic crises in 1997–98, levels of development have included a world leader (Japan) and several countries (e.g., South Korea) that have been the economic envy of the developing world, as well as others (e.g., Indonesia) that have made strong moves towards development; but there have also been *débâcles*, as in Burma.

Politically, rising democracy has added diversity to what was, outside Japan, mostly a range between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes; there have been bastions of stability, and cases of extended internal warfare (e.g., Vietnam). Direct colonial influences have come from Britain, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain and the United States, whereas in Latin America these influences came overwhelmingly from just Spain and Portugal. In light of this, it is not surprising that East Asia's higher education systems vary enormously. My focus here on international modernisation perforce marginalises Burma and North Korea—but not China; there are limits on just how different cases can be for important common tendencies to appear. Except for passing references, Yee's book does not deal with Brunei, Cambodia, Laos or Macau.

On the other hand, the great variety within each region allows for not only broad similarities between the regions generally but also many more specific similarities among countries in the two regions. For example, where Brazil and Chile carefully select who enters their elite public universities—consequently driving aspirants towards special private preparatory courses—they are closer to Japan and other East Asian countries than to most other Latin American countries.

Perhaps the most striking cases where countries from one region echo many basic patterns associated with the other region generally—rather than with just a couple of its atypical national systems—are Indonesia and the Philippines. The chapters on Indonesia discuss many characteristics prominent in Schwartzman's account of Latin America: a strong egalitarian norm reflected in acquiescence to a demand for access that exceeds the system's capacity to offer education of high quality; rapid inter-institutional diversification; heavy concentrations of enrolments in "soft" social studies and humanities, with associated concerns over weak insertion into the job market; a dubiously high proportion of higher education to total education expenditures; delayed development of technical higher education, weak quality controls or incentives for improvement; a lack of public confidence in higher education; and particular concern for many of these problems in the often parasitic private higher education sector.

However, the chapter by Cooney and Paqueo-Arreza, and part of a more general chapter by Yee and Lim, suggest an even tighter match between

Philippine and Latin American tendencies, perhaps partly linked to a shared Spanish colonial legacy: the contrast between government's ample responsibilities—tied to its overwhelming financing of the public sector—and its inability to regulate or evaluate; difficulties in establishing accreditation in the face of a frightened professoriate; expansion through social demand or provincial legislative fiat with little regard for academic rigour; excessive regulations that do not stimulate productivity but block flexibility and innovation; political obstacles to imposition of tuition fees; and a contrast between lauded islands of excellence and a general conviction that the system is seriously underperforming.

Cross-regional matching can become more salient where trends such as massive growth in enrolment and strengthened civil society take hold in East Asia, and where stringent academic policies and effective government gain ground in Latin America.

## II

Let us look, then, at the international reform agenda. Promoters include the World Bank and regional development banks, as well as most governments and many of the developing regions' higher education experts who consult and publish internationally. The effort gains force from wider economic, technological and political internationalisation. Thus the Chinese and Argentine higher education systems appear more open to international currents than for many decades: perhaps much more, though this is not the first time that an international agenda has appeared or had a simultaneous effect in the two regions. An international reform agenda which mustered great energy for about 25 years after the Second World War had roots in early twentieth-century philanthropy. That agenda was much more directly focused than today's on academic matters: movement from rigid and autonomous professional faculties to more coherent universities built on departments featuring electives, credit systems, the integration of science and research to undergraduate education, and so forth. (The books under review tend to reinforce an impression that academic matters now penetrate national reforms more in East Asia than in Latin America.) Where the previous international agenda touched broad political-economic issues it tended to fit the expansive notion of "national development", which contrasts with today's neo-liberal orientations.<sup>1</sup>

The present agenda's force does not come, however, from encompassing all reforms in process, under consideration, or worthy of consideration. Critics would point out that the agenda often undermines what they see as desirable reform. By the same token, it is not a firm blueprint, and different documents

<sup>1</sup> One good source on the prior efforts is Coleman, James S. and Court, David, *The Development of Universities in the Third World: The Rockefeller Foundation* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1992).

overlap and complement more than they replicate each other. But enough common and interrelated features emerge to identify the agenda. These two books illustrate this contention.

One core idea, more explicitly and conceptually developed in Schwartzman's book, is direct accountability to external actors; these include the taxpaying public, government and employers. The idea runs counter to the belief that universities will best serve society in the long run by autonomously pursuing their own goals. Schwartzman contrasts today's agenda with the Córdoba reform that spread from Argentina in 1918 to much of Latin America, and which emphasised self-rule and a major role for universities in leading their societies; now universities are pushed to serve trends hatched in the wider society, often in the economic market-place. This is movement away from the idea of public trust in universities, sometimes tempered by a priori government rules which now, however, yield increasingly to a posterior evaluation.<sup>2</sup>

Schwartzman notes that the new accountability does not negate autonomy but pins its fate on its ability to enhance direct accountability. Autonomy has value as a means—especially as an alternative to the sort of heavy centralised national planning at odds with the reform agenda—but it loses legitimacy as an intrinsic good. Accordingly, self-evaluation and peer review are widely encouraged in both regions, but are largely contingent on how they contribute to measures of external accountability, as S. Yamamoto (in Yee's volume) indicates for Japan. Establishment of formal accreditation systems, often pioneered in private institutions—whether by voluntary initiative or by government regulations not imposed on public counterparts—has become a favourite way to pursue this type of evaluation, whether in Bolivia or Hong Kong.

Intimately linked to the reworked mix of autonomy and accountability is competition. Institutions, units within them, and individual professors and students must increasingly compete as a way to improve general performance and as a way, through evaluation, to reward and thereby stimulate more effective and efficient performance—or to reward ends that governments, or other fund-givers, happen to favour. Such competitive rewards represent a pointed attack on across-the-board subsidies disbursed by non-evaluating governments. In practice this has often meant initiating competitively judged funding opportunities alongside continuing, if diminished, basic subsidies. Like many Latin American national councils of science and technology, China has established national funds that favour “hard” over “soft” fields; Singapore and Malaysia have created new financial incentives for those who excel, just as Argentina and Venezuela and Brazil have created supplemental salary pools for productive professors.

<sup>2</sup> Neave, Guy, “On the Cultivation of Quality, Efficiency, and Enterprise: An Overview of Recent Trends in Higher Education in Western Europe”, *European Journal of Education*, XXIII (1988).

Another crucial feature of the agenda is a revamped role for government, largely to fit and stimulate the new dynamics of accountability and competition. The authors' examples show that market-oriented modernisation is not necessarily anti-government. To be sure, it often means reducing subsidies to Latin America's public sector or the proportion of East Asian higher education that will be publicly supported as small systems yield to a massification that relies heavily on private institutions. Moreover, where public sectors are stigmatised as bureaucratic and tied to automatic rather than performance-based finance, deregulation becomes national policy (e.g., Indonesia, South Korea) or at least occurs piecemeal (Uruguay, Costa Rica). Still, government mostly looks to become more influential as it tries to maximise performance it values.

In any event, Schwartzman does not join the powerful chorus of those in Latin America who do roundly discredit government—and such discrediting does not surface in the Asian case studies. In fact, governments in some Asian countries frequently praised by international development banks for their educational policies have covered almost all university development and recurrent expenses (Singapore and Malaysia, unlike South Korea). Even where Latin America looks to the United States as a model, it should avoid false impressions that government is marginal, but where it looks to Japan or most of East Asia, it can certainly see present practice and agendas that accord a prominent role to government.

A final point about the political side of the agenda is that it is usually an explicit treatment of how modernisation could be—I would say should be—democratic modernisation. As we shall see below, the banner of “democratisation” has often been raised in opposition to key features of the reform in question. But promoters of modernisation should not tacitly concede democratic terrain to their opposition; and analysts of contemporary reform efforts should explore what definitions and elements of democracy can and cannot be fitted together with other aspects of the agenda.

Both books concentrate on universities, though they include some material on research academies, technical institutes, short-cycle higher education, and the like. Schwartzman's title designates “*Universidades*” as his subject and Yee's use of “*Traditions*” turns our attention towards universities since they are typically the long-standing centrepiece of higher education. But both authors could do more to tell readers how far higher education goes beyond universities. This point is relevant for the reform agenda: for example, research academies or centres may suit efforts to target resources to selected high performers and they also represent researchers' efforts to escape standardised rules. Japan's High Energy Physics Research Institute is among places cited in passing.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Freestanding private research centres have had a pronounced impact throughout Latin America; see Levy, Daniel, *Building the Third Sector: Private Research Centers and Nonprofit*

## III

Gross cross-regional comparisons are especially problematic when considering works written not only in isolation from one another but also in quite dissimilar fashion. Nonetheless, it appears that East Asia more often than Latin America conforms to the international reform agenda. That helps explain why the modernisers' critique of present reality is more scathing and encompassing in Latin America. As Schwartzman shows, Latin American higher education is widely seen as mired in failed policy from which it must be dragged into fundamentally different practices, though the author himself avoids such oversimplified evaluation.

In contrast, the Yee volume conveys an impression that many East Asian systems have been performing reasonably well and now need a degree of reform—often quite feasible reform—in order to participate appropriately in the next stages of national development.<sup>4</sup>

A core example of where East Asia appears to lie closer than Latin America to the international agenda is the government's role in the private-public mix. Granted, powerful cross-regional commonalities emerge: both regions are enmeshed in a multi-faceted privatisation that breaks from earlier traditions of public dominance, and many of the facets—for example, the juxtaposition of elite, non-profit and lower-status profit-seeking institutions—trace parallel paths in certain systems or subsystems from the different regions. But most East Asian governments were prepared earlier in the process of expansion to permit the appearance and heavy use of private institutions to protect elite status and controlled expenditures in the public sector. Today East Asian governments (e.g., Vietnam), unlike their Latin American counterparts, openly and vigorously promote a major role to private institutions in their national plans. They have also been readier to strengthen the private sector with public funds, and to insist on some private funding in public institutions, and they appear to be better able to undertake the tricky exercise of regulating private institutions.<sup>5</sup> Both regions show a mix of what the international

*Development in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996). Burton R. Clark's account of the developed world shows a rising tendency to separate research from undergraduate teaching; see *Places of Inquiry: Research and Advanced Education in Modern Universities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). But Hayhoe and Zhong in Yee's book show that China has been trying to break the Soviet legacy of separation, and there is similar movement in former communist countries in Europe; see, e.g., Worgan, Patricia, "The Changing Relationship between the State and Higher Education in the Czech Republic", *Higher Education Management*, VII (1995), pp. 241–251.

<sup>4</sup> Although I am not focusing here on the overall performance of the higher education systems, it is noteworthy that Yee includes examples of success unparalleled in Latin America. For example, China has since the late 1970s appeared on international indexes of scientific publications whereas Latin America has continued to stagnate. Of course, the Chinese performance is unenviable in social science, where Latin America has achieved breakthroughs.

<sup>5</sup> These points find more abundant support in the country reports presented at a conference on "Private Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific", Xiamen, China, 31 October–3 November, 1995, as shown in Wongsathorn, Tong-In and Wang, Yibing (eds), *Final Report* (Bangkok: UNESCO/SEAMO, n.d.). Perhaps the economic crisis of 1997–98 will accelerate efforts to reduce the public share of funding, but undercut efforts to subsidise private institutions.

modernisers would consider inadequate and excessive governmental controls over private institutions, but inadequate regulation appears to be the overwhelming problem in Latin America, whereas in East Asia there are more calls for deregulation (e.g., the Philippines). Latin America remains generally less able to implement reasonable private-public policies.

One intriguing explanation for the cross-regional difference in fidelity to the international agenda is political culture, in particular the degree of resistance to the spectre of foreign imposition. Judging from the information presented in the Yee volume, East Asian policy often follows the Meiji (nineteenth-century Japanese) precedent of receptivity, emulation and adaptation of the developed world's ways. Where East Asian countries lean more to the Latin American side in distrust of such influences, how often does that distrust likewise find leadership, often successful leadership, in the public university? (It might be that some higher education systems that have endured their own regimes' repression have come to look more kindly on international forces, as we could argue for much of Latin America that has freed itself from military rule.)

A second, but related, explanation is that higher education systems which are younger and smaller usually develop less entrenched, formidable opposition to change. Several Asian countries, such as Burma, Indonesia and Thailand, had no university until some time in this century. The only Latin American country that had no university was Brazil, and it did have many professional field faculties that needed only a loose institutional umbrella to match university counterparts in the region; Spanish America's universities started to be formed in the sixteenth century. Thus, in Latin America, universities generally preceded political independence, which only sometimes happened in East Asia; and in East Asia colonial rule sometimes persisted well into the twentieth century, whereas it ended for almost all of Latin America early in the nineteenth century.

Explanations dealing with newness and size tie into a favourite point of international agencies as they thrust East Asian examples in the face of troubled Latin America. This is that East Asia has gone much further in the development of its primary and secondary education, in quantitative and qualitative terms, before embarking on the quantitative surge in higher education which has thrown things out of balance in Latin America. Several chapters in *East Asian Higher Education* sustain the internationally purveyed impression that countries which have attended reasonably well to primary and secondary education can now turn to higher education. Schwartzman compares seven Latin American and five East Asian countries regarding percentage expansion in enrolments from 1975 to 1985 (p. 60). Whereas the former cases range from 0 to 125 per cent, the latter range from 100 to 296 per cent. The cross-regional difference is owed largely to East Asia's much lower starting point. Although South Korea and the Philippines came to lead all seven Latin American cases in enrolments per population, the other three East Asian countries continued to lag behind all seven by huge amounts.

There is also a much less flattering explanation for East Asia's fidelity to the international agenda, namely the greater authoritarian hierarchy that has operated in many of its countries. Thus, the key variable may not be the range of viewpoints about the international agenda so much as the distribution of power, particularly between governments—which are largely supportive, in both regions—and other interests in higher education and society which are more mixed or negative.

Even where Latin America has suffered under authoritarian regimes, its universities and freestanding research centres have often been among the leading bastions of relative autonomy. Even where the regimes have had the "strength" to suppress, they have rarely had the strength to construct systems to their taste. Schwartzman notes this point while also identifying the major exceptions: Chile in the 1980s and Brazil at the graduate level in the 1960s and 1970s (but still not at the undergraduate level). The institutional autonomy found in Latin American higher education marks a sharp break from the "Napoleonic" model which Latin America copied from Europe in many other respects. Most policies have not been effectively standardised throughout even in the public universities; the proliferation of private institutions since the 1930s, accelerated since the 1960s, has multiplied centrifugal forces. Central government does not make most decisions on curriculum, structure or process on the administrative or, especially, the academic front.

Not that institutions *per se* have typically been strong in Latin America. As Schwartzman shows, student movements used to be major actors and, as they have lost their influential voice on national and global issues, they have reinforced their status as interest groups which fight institutional heads, governments and others in order to shield their largely ill-prepared, and often part-time, working members from internationally promoted higher education reforms—entrance examinations, tuition fees, qualifying tests for professional practice, etc. Schwartzman sketches a somewhat parallel tale for academics, and then explains how a new political actor—the campus worker—is likewise opposing international reform at public universities. In sum, the agenda is frequently stymied in a political context in which power, in comparison with most East Asian examples, remains dispersed.<sup>6</sup>

Of course, student politics have also played major roles in opposing the regime at various junctures in modern Asian history, and one can find other parallels to Latin America where democracy has limited the reach of government—Japan, the Philippines and, increasingly, a few other countries.

<sup>6</sup> The brain drain affects both regions—both within and from them—and has many causes, including political ones which make for interesting cross-cultural comparisons. A "Chinese intellectual diaspora" stemming partly from an internationalisation that allows students to travel, combines with a persisting governmental repression that makes many want to stay abroad (Hayhoe and Zhong in Yee, p. 131). Schwartzman shows that whereas repressive governments in South America lost many scholars in the 1970s, populist university politics or neo-liberal restrictions on public funding are now more likely to contribute to an exodus by leading academics.



On the other hand, Asian countries such as Burma and China display an extreme of repressive control unknown in Latin America, notwithstanding the unique case of Cuba. Kim and Ahn report that all North Korean higher education students are in the Red Youth Guards and that the Communist Party continues to rule the system (Yee, pp. 109–110).

A contrast worth highlighting here concerns the power of governments to make academic policy which is not primarily or brutally repressive in content, regardless of how hierarchically it might be made. An example concerns social-political pressure for expansion. By mid-century, a rising Latin American middle class and some sectors of organised labour could take a popular notion of “democratisation” right into the university. Vote-seeking politicians in democracies, but also support-seeking politicians even in most dictatorial regimes in Latin America, found it convenient to be responsive to such demand—even while they were less concerned about the weaker groups whose educational fortunes remained tied to the primary school.

In comparison, East Asia’s policies on access to education were typically less democratic in input and more egalitarian in output. Aided by distinctly non-populist traditions, including reverence for elite learning and rigorous subject-based examinations which stress memorisation and lead to high failure rates, governments ready to concentrate on the earlier years of schooling could hold back expansion of higher education. Malaysia in the 1990s had only 6 per cent of its age cohort in higher education, a figure unthinkable for any but Latin America’s poorest countries; China had 2 per cent. When East Asia does break out towards massive enrolments, it rarely follows the typical Latin American route led by public institutions—which, unlike some of East Asia’s, have almost never charged tuition fees. Even in the Philippines and Indonesia, the two systems most resembling Latin America, the public university closes its door to the majority of aspirants.

Similarly, Latin American governments have rarely undertaken sustained, forceful efforts to control matters of academic policy, again leaving much to institutions and interest groups. No case—at least outside Cuba—approximates Singapore’s “micromanaging” (Lim in Yee, p. 81) of higher education, or Indonesia’s mandating of university standards ranging from core curriculum to appointments. Nor could a book on Latin America produce many parallels to other East Asian practices such as Taiwan’s well-developed and structured vocational postsecondary education, and novel five-year job-oriented programmes; Vietnam’s resolute launching at old military institutions of community colleges to tackle a tradition (common in Latin America too) of disdain for manual labour; China’s designation of 98 priority institutions or its establishment in 1979 of exclusive graduate study. Of course, such generalisations do not negate examples of effective governmental—let alone non-governmental—action in Latin America, or of governments’ inability to avoid “technically incorrect” practices in East Asia: for example, “overproduction” of humanities alongside insufficient production for certain job specialties in Malaysia.

If the basic argument here is correct, then international promoters of the reform agenda too often marginalise a crucial point: the role played by the distribution of power. Latin American adoption of reform remains piecemeal and problematic as supportive economic, technical and international forces meet democratising forces that allow groups to resist. Most East Asian governments retain greater latitude to set and pursue their course. The point here about relative inattention to the distribution of power parallels my earlier point about relative inattention to democracy, and each point has implications for both the formulation and analysis of reform policy; in the two books under review, the most significant pertinent accomplishment is Schwartzman's analysis of power distribution.

Various chapters in the Yee volume show that the concentration of governmental power often exceeds what can be consistent with a competitive market system. This is obviously the case where governments have maintained totalitarian control over their populations and institutions, and these governments are clearly out of favour by the authors. A murkier impression is left about less brutal regimes. If the book has a general drift it seems to be that they have at least turned in mixed performances, both limiting liberty and building formidable bases of sound policies which can now be the platform for a surge of modernisation—but that this surge requires an increase in freedom, participation, autonomy, plural forces, competition, deregulation, and so forth.

Political liberalisation in systems long based on stable political control and economic growth is of course problematic (even apart from the fresh uncertainties generated by economic crisis), whether it be for any of the "four tigers": South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan—or for perhaps the closest but shaky Latin American counterpart, Mexico. It is certainly tricky when related to higher education policy. To the extent that East Asia already conforms more than Latin America to certain tenets of the international agenda, the reforms it needs involve matters excluded from the harsh or simplified versions of the agenda that international agencies and governments sometimes propagate in Latin America; they lie outside what Latin American critics see as an "orthodox" international agenda. Examples of measures outside that agenda include expansion of higher education and less authoritarian control by government.

No easier, however, is a more common Latin American challenge: to build government's ability to reform by earning greater support in a democratising society that will come to see its own general interests helped rather than threatened by reform. Schwartzman's main purpose is not prognostication on such matters, and he notes the recent acceleration of changes which promote modernisation, but he repeatedly shows that actual policy remains far from what the agenda calls for, and that many political forces combine with embedded norms and structures to make the immediate road ahead problematic.

#### IV

Each of these books merits an audience. Each provides information on

important matters, some central to the reform agenda and its roots, dimensions and prospects, others only peripherally related. Each is promoted by a major international organisation—Schwartzman's is published by the Organization of American States, and Yee's is part of the valuable higher education series produced through the International Association of Universities.

When examining several conventional indicators of scholarly quality, it is important to remember that a book's worth depends greatly on what the existing literature offers. Yee opens with this statement: "Compared to the sophisticated study of higher education in other major world areas, the study of East Asian higher education has hardly been tapped" (p. 1). Meanwhile, work on Latin American higher education, while still much less abundant than on the developed world, has advanced greatly in the last two decades. For some East Asian countries, the lack of previously published material would handicap any author compared to the material Schwartzman had at his disposal on Latin America. Nonetheless, for most of the countries that dominate the individual chapters of *East Asian Higher Education*, there is already a valuable body of literature—on Japan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, Indonesia, China and the Philippines—but its use here is spotty. Also spotty is use of works on the region overall, classics on comparative higher education worldwide, and major social science works that do not deal directly with higher education but offer pertinent concepts and methods. Too often, then, readers are left with *ad hoc* observations and descriptions—which is not to overlook value in even the most personal accounts, such as Do's on Vietnam. Nor is the volume integrated around a defining framework (though Yee's introduction does make some helpful connections), since most chapters deal with one or two countries and do not refer to other chapters; the lack of cross-reference holds even where two chapters deal with the same country (Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam).

Such limitations are hardly unusual in edited volumes. There is only so much an editor can do after the fact to tie together chapters that are this different from one another. If there is a theme, it is that wide-ranging and complex matters condition the diverse educational development of countries. However, in their diversity the chapters do cover a broad range of experience, and some chapters offer much more. The piece on private higher education by Yee and Lim compares countries and reaches perceptive conclusions on matters such as the circumstances under which degrees carry weight. Following a two-page chapter on a project at the University of Tokyo is a more scholarly chapter, by Yamamoto, on research and development at Japanese universities. Hayhoe and Zhong on Chinese science, and Cooney and Paqueo-Arreza on attempts to regulate quality in the Philippines, are also among the meatier chapters.

In contrast, *América Latina* benefits from single authorship that brings a consistency of scholarship across chapters and repeatedly allows for focused comparisons across countries. These comparisons facilitate regional gener-

alisation where possible, but more often Schwartzman prudently narrows his national scope. First, he writes more about Brazil than any other country. Some sections, as in chapter two, draw almost exclusively on Brazil and the book's only appendix is, oddly, a chapter on Brazilian private higher education by two different authors. Schwartzman might have made a more explicit declaration and justification of his emphasis on Brazil, but it seems clear enough: this is the author's own country, on which he has long been the leading higher education scholar, and this is by far the largest country, with the largest higher education system, in Latin America.

Second, Schwartzman draws heavily off two solid comparative projects: a charting of 1990s trends in five large countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico) sponsored by the Ford Foundation, and the Latin American component (Brazil, Chile and Mexico) of the Carnegie Foundation's recent international survey of the academic profession. But Schwartzman is also one of the leading authorities on Latin American higher education in general, and he has a firm sense of when to make inclusive statements of fact or informed speculation, and when to concentrate on sub-patterns within the region.

Schwartzman's geographical coverage is matched by his coverage of topics. Expansion, finance, governance, teaching, graduate education, research and reform are all ably introduced here. I have drawn on points crucial to the reform agenda, but Schwartzman's readers could use his findings to illuminate other concerns. Because he has analysed broad material ably, even wisely, and because the information is up to date, I consider this the best brief introductory book on Latin American higher education. It should be translated into English.

As an introductory work dedicated to the transmission of rapidly accumulating knowledge, *América Latina* cannot be equated with the scholarship in Schwartzman's books dedicated to the discovery of knowledge. But the additional element that makes the present work so valuable is that "introductory" does not mean lacking in conceptualisation and even theory. On the contrary, the ample descriptive information is easier to read, appreciate, make sense of and retain, because of its scholarly presentation. Whatever the topic at hand, from institutional diversification to student politics, Schwartzman knows the relevant literature in comparative higher education. Altbach, Clark, Fulton and Ringer are just a few of those appropriately used. Moreover, drawing on his background in political sociology, Schwartzman also invokes authors such as Boudon, Collins, Durkheim and Parsons to develop ideal types and other tools that guide his analysis of power struggles, elite-mass clashes, professionalisation, and many other matters in which higher education is best seen within broader contexts.

So it is with the reform agenda. It is not portrayed as an ahistorical development or a simple technocratic solution. Instead, readers are given a sense of which interests are at stake, of precedents, or variations by time and place—and of the simplifications often made by proponents and critics alike.

Above all, one gets a sense of the struggle, of the pros and cons, and of the competing rationalities—a sense missing from some of the chapters in the Yee volume though, again, it appears that the struggle is less momentous or at least less open in many East Asian countries.

There is profit in reading each of these books and there is profit in reading them together. The subject-matter they cover leads us towards similarities and differences that strengthen the conviction that there should be more work that is deliberately cross-regional in conception and coverage.